

State Environment Department Seeks Public Input on Water Quality Study of the Lower Pecos River Watershed

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB) is seeking public input on a comprehensive surface water quality study for the lower Pecos River watershed in the southeastern portion of the state. The survey of the lower Pecos River and its tributaries, from Fort Sumner Dam to the New Mexico/Texas border (including Rio Ruidoso, Rio Hondo, Rio Bonito, and Rio Penasco), will begin this spring. Results of the survey will be used to determine the status of water quality within the watershed, track water quality improvements, and identify impaired waterbodies.

Four public meetings for the Lower Pecos watershed will be held at the following times and locations:

- Fort Sumner, NM: February 25, 2003, DeBaca County Courthouse Annex, 548 Avenue C, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Carlsbad, NM: February 26, 2003, Carlsbad Public Library Annex, 101 S. Halagueno, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Roswell, NM: March 3, 2003, U. S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) District Library, 2909 W. 2nd St., 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Ruidoso, NM: March 4, 2003, Ruidoso Village Hall, 313 Cree Meadows Dr., 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Representatives from the SWQB will discuss the monitoring plan for the lower Pecos River watershed and will provide a forum for interested parties to ask questions and provide comments. The SWQB is seeking opinions of area residents, and tribal and governmental agencies regarding areas of concern that may not have been addressed in the preliminary study design. The SWQB also invites the public to observe staff on sampling trips and offers a field demonstration of sampling procedures in the summer.

The data gathered will also be used to develop total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for those waterbodies impaired by one or more pollutants. A TMDL is a planning document that establishes specific goals for water quality conditions. It includes reduction estimates for pollutants currently violating state surface water quality standards and an implementation plan suggesting what actions might be carried out to restore or protect the health of the waterbody. The process for developing a TMDL will also be described and discussed at the meeting.

Additional information can be found on the web at <<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb>>. Questions and comments can be directed to Stephanie Stringer SWQB at (505) 827-0418, 1190 St. Francis Dr., Santa Fe, NM 87505, or e-mail <stephanie_stringer@nmenv.state.nm.us>.